

Compilation of Public Comment on City Hall Relocation

This document contains a summary of comments made by citizens between the dates of September 2004 and March 22, 2005, at City Council meetings and public hearings relating to the relocation of City Hall. The summary, listed by speaker, includes verbal and written testimony.

Please note that comments made during the November 23, 2004, public hearing were based on three alternative sites: Branchville, Cass, and Shaban properties. Comments on the Cass and Shaban sites are not included as they have been eliminated from consideration. Therefore, the remaining comments may seem unduly in favor of Branchville because the Friends site and the Special Lot were not considered during that particular hearing. The date is in brackets behind all comments from this public hearing.

Helmut Lutz—September 22,2004—Public Hearing

- Wants to know what the value is of the current City Hall building.
- Says that the current building is a perfectly fine building and doesn't need to be improved.
- Says that we don't have the money for a police department, we don't have money to improve Route 1, and we don't have \$50,000 to fight rats, but we have the money to tear down a perfectly good building?
- Thinks this issue should be on referendum
- Thinks there is a lack of analysis on alternative sites
- A school will always lose out when talking about the revenue stream.
- The problem with this entire project is that alternative options have not been explored.

Unknown Speaker—September 22,2004—Public Hearing

- Will the park at Friends school be preserved if the city hall is moved there? If so, how much will be preserved?

Aaron Springer— September 22,2004—Public Hearing

- Council should preserve the playing fields at the Friends school if the city hall is moved there.
- Thinks moving City Hall to the Friends site is a fabulous idea. He congratulates the City for progressive, forward thinking. He thinks this will stabilize the neighborhood even further. It will be a great anchor to the southern gate of the City.
- The new city hall should have more space for community groups.

Ms. Amelia Murdock— September 22,2004—Public Hearing

- Wants to know if you would destroy the school if you moved City Hall there?
- Thinks that Friends school is a better site for a city hall than the special lot because of the ambiance.

Miranda Martin, Calvert Hills— September 22,2004—Public Hearing

- Are there security issues in having a playing field with lots of participants next to a public building?
- How would you control the renting of condos to students?

Mr. Biffi— September 22,2004, Public Hearing; November 23, 2004, Public Hearing

- Questions about the financing of the project
- Would existing businesses on Route 1 stay there?
- Questions about the proposed retail space
- Spoke about slowing the process down and the relocation of City Hall to Friends School [November 23, 2004, Public Hearing]
- Interested in the City working with the University for the possibility of establishing a University Lab School at the site of the Friends School [November 23, 2004, Public Hearing]

Veronica Larvie, Calvert Hills, President of the College Park Nursery School
September 22,2004, Public Hearing; November 23, 2004, Public Hearing; written correspondence

- She is struggling with the finances for this project
- Doesn't look like it equals net zero when you subtract the Friends school
- If you knock down Friends school, you will lose the character of the neighborhood
- College Park Nursery School would love an opportunity to look into occupying that space [Friends school]
- Knocking down a perfectly good building for retail space when you don't have an anchor store makes no sense. What model are you using? What kind of retail are we trying to attract?
- She applauds the Council for looking in the future, but suggests not making hasty decisions.
- Opposes any kind of parking structure that requires the demolition of the existing City building
- There is no solid basis for eliminating a school from our community. Economics cannot be cited as the reason; placing an emphasis on education is not something that can be measured in tax revenue.
- The metro parking lot currently under construction is going to be enormous. Is it a good idea to have two large parking garages within one mile of each other? Couldn't we lease portions of that parking structure and provide shuttle service?
- The Shoppers/Cherry Hill Road development is sub-standard from an access and aesthetic point of view. Another development like that and I would consider relocating.
- Unless the City can refer us to a model where a city-owned structure like this has attracted family-friendly businesses (as opposed to businesses catering to college students like "Roly Poly", Quiznos, and the like), then I cannot justify such a radical decision by the City to throw away a city asset like the current City Hall. Why don't you talk to "Fresh Fields" (also known as Whole Foods) about building a large anchor store, with a paying garage, like the stores they own on P Street and on Connecticut Avenue in D.C.? Both these stores have large parking garages that are free for paying customers but are available for others at a charge.

This would be an asset to our community and would spur the kinds of small business interest that the City would benefit from attracting.

Bob Agberson, Amherst Road—September 22, 2004, public hearing

- Questions about revenue

Morgan Gale, Calvert Hills—September 22, 2004, public hearing; November 23, 2004, public hearing; December 14, 2004 Council meeting; written correspondence

- Concerned that the Council is not looking at any land that the City doesn't already own. He thinks we should look at land to buy.
- He says there isn't a face of the City. He thinks there should be a City Hall presence on Route 1.
- Thinks we should keep Friends school even if it costs the City money.
- Calvert Hills Association met a few weeks ago and sent Mayor and Council a letter explaining the results of that meeting (see attached)
- They expect Council to keep them fully informed, as they will to the Council.
- Morgan thinks the options are varied. Says we need more concrete numbers, more concrete proposals, including costs, and perhaps look at other options.
- Urges Council not to "go ahead" until those meetings take place and those decisions are made. For example: how much would it cost the City to keep a school on Calvert Road?
- The Branchville site is very accessible but all three of these proposals make it difficult for students to be active participants in the City. He asked that the City earmark any money that is derived from their plans to go to public safety issues or for environmental issues such as tree planting, streetscapes, etc. [November 23, 2004 public hearing]

Dr. Dora Kennedy, Calvert Hills—September 22, 2004, public hearing; November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Reminder: the school is a historic place. Not everything is money. We don't need more residential units. We should retain an education use at the school site. The city doesn't have to be money hungry about everything. We need to retain character in College Park.
- If City Hall has to go to the Friends site, then there should be a historic meeting area there
- Urged the Council to preserve the neighborhoods in the City of College Park. She would like Friends School to be rented out to another school endeavor. As far as the three sites being discussed (Branchville, Cass, and Shaban), she liked the Branchville Fire Department area because it made the most sense with the space and accessibility. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Mark Montrel, Rhode Island Ave.—September 22, 2004, public hearing

- Questions about leasing

Liz Fostmarring, Guilford Road—September 22, 2004, public hearing

- Hopes there will be an effort first and foremost to bring a school into the school. You can't put a price on education.

Former Mayor Page—September 22, 2004, public hearing

- Council needs to do what the community wants because that is part of being in government.
- City Hall is currently buried behind some dumps. Why don't we get rid of the dumps?
- If we don't pay attention to education, we will loose.
- He thinks the school district would welcome the site back.

Aaron Springer—September 22, 2004, public hearing

- Is there a space at the Friends school/City Hall site for 100 kids in the nursery school to have a stabilized place?

Unknown Speaker—September 22, 2004, public hearing

- Friends school has been poorly utilized for the 12 years that he has been here. It doesn't seem wise to spend \$3 million just to renovate it.
- Hats off to staff and Council for considering using this site as a parking garage.

Kim Kramer, Wake Forest Drive—September 22, 2004, public hearing

- Questions about sustainable design and environmentally responsible planning

Sarah Cutler, Rhode Island Avenue (Calvert Hills)—September 22, 2004, public hearing

- Questions about traffic

Unknown Speaker—September 22, 2004, public hearing

- Where would the money come from to renovate the school if the City doesn't move there?

David Dorsch—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Felt the most appropriate site for the City Hall would be the Branchville site because of the size of the site and the access to the site. It also would not detract from the current City's tax role. He was also interested in keeping City Hall at the current site, even if it means putting it under or on top of the parking garage. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Mary Cook—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Like the Branchville Fire Department property due to the three metro bus routes that go by there, which makes it accessible. She like the idea of it being in North College Park and felt it would be a deterrent to some of the crime that has been going on there. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Corey Harbison—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Preferred the Branchville site because she felt that North College Park would get a larger share of public services than it does now and because of the accessibility with public transportation. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Larry Bleau—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- He liked the Branchville site because of its location and because we would not lose any generated revenue. We can also fit all of our parking needs on this lot. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Andrew Rose, Senior Vice-President of the SGA—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- On behalf of students, he stated that he would not like City Hall moved from its downtown location. Over the last several years the City Council has made excellent strides in working with students on student issues such as the Student Liaison position, A Taste of College Park, and the Fall Festival. He felt that bigger student issues would come into play over the next few years and he felt that the City needed to make sure that students were able to access public officials and be aware of the issues that come into light. He felt that if City Hall were to be moved outside of downtown College Park that it would really discourage student involvement. Having City Hall downtown makes it look like the City is part of the downtown community, which the students use most. He also wanted the City Hall to have multiple uses to benefit the City other than to just have meetings. He objected to all three proposals (Branchville, Cass, and Shaban). [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Byron MacFarlane—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Stated that as a student, he has enjoyed the access to City Hall being downtown. He also felt that there was an enormous symbolic significance to having City Hall within walking distance of the students. Of the three locations proposed (Branchville, Cass, and Shaban), he liked the Branchville site the best, although he did not like walking across Route 1. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Scott Tsikerdanos, Speaker of the SGA—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Stated they are really trying to get a focus on tradition and history at the University this year among the students. Part of what goes with that is an identification with the City of College Park. It is integral to have the City be focused on as part of the University of Maryland—they go hand in hand. He could not endorse any of the three proposals (Branchville, Cass, and Shaban). He encouraged that City Hall remain downtown so that students could identify with the City Hall as this area continues to grow. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Jack Robson—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Felt that if we moved City Hall there would be a problem with voting in the area of the current City Hall. He liked the Branchville site the best (out of Branchville, Cass, and Shaban), although he did not approve of any of the sites. It would not take anything off of the tax roles and it would provide a large parking lot. His preference was to keep City Hall downtown. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Ellen O'Neil—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Agreed that the current City Hall seems to be functioning very well. Her choice of the three alternative locations (Branchville, Cass, and Shaban) was the Branchville site. It is the most accessible and will add to the adjoining community. She felt that there should always be a school at the Friends School site. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Deborah Levenson—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- She is happy with where City Hall is currently located. She felt that there were only two viable options for the relocation of City Hall: the Friends School site and the Branchville site. She preferred the Branchville site because of its accessibility. She felt if City Hall were relocated to the Friends School site, it would be dangerous to the amount of children that live in the area due to the increase in traffic. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Mark Shroder—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Felt that everyone was speaking about spending millions of dollars on symbols—keeping the Friends School a school. There is no tenant that is going to justify that kind of expenditure. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]
- The fact is the City provides services and takes revenues from many students but not students on campus. The only connection that students on campus have with either revenues or services is parking tickets. The service that they need for parking tickets could be handled with a drop box. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]
- Of the three sites (Branchville, Cass, and Shaban), he thought that the Branchville site would be an excellent site. He asked the Council to consider some site in Berwyn. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Jerry Anzulovic—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Stated that if we couldn't go to Calvert Hill, he suggested the Branchville site. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Pay Wu—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Stated that City Hall should be located where its impact can reach the most citizens and in the highest capacity. Placement should be accessible to where all of the action is—where most business is and where the majority of traffic and volume of people are. The three factors should be access, awareness, and safety. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Alan Tyler—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Thought that the City needed an education on why they wanted to move City Hall, why they wanted to build the parking garage, and what the benefits were for what they wanted to do. He preferred the Branchville site from what he heard at the meeting (Branchville, Cass, and Shaban). Perhaps they could not move City Hall and just put the parking garage on the special lot. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Former Mayor Dervey Lomax—November 23, 2004, public hearing

- Asked the Council to match the services that they will be giving with the site that they select and then look at the budget. [November 23, 2004, public hearing]

Ted Ankeney, President of Downtown College Park Management Authority (DCPMA) as well as General Manager of the Maryland Book Exchange—December 14, 2004, City Council meeting; written correspondence

- He has been in business since 1965, and it's a no brainer. We need parking downtown. Council should make a decision and get it done.
- The most beneficial proposal would be a mix of parking, retail, and condominiums on the present City Hall site, with a stand-alone parking garage on the special lot site. This would yield the greatest net gain in parking spaces for those businesses already located in the downtown area.
- Additional parking is the main concern of the membership. Additional parking would encourage new development in the downtown area.

John Brown, RJ Bentley's, Treasurer of DCPMA—December 14, 2004, City Council meeting

- This [topic] is this Council's and this City's opportunity to be great as a downtown area. It's time to do it. It's not just a matter of trying to be great; it's a matter of trying to save what we have. He has customers that have told him that they don't come to College Park as often because they can't find parking. Keeping City Hall here doesn't work out economically.
- He encourages the Council to think forward.
- He doesn't think City Hall should be on the special lot. He would like to keep City Hall downtown, but the economic benefits of the use of these two lots is more important to him.

Joan Sicher, Director and teacher at College Park Nursery School—written correspondence

- Been director and teacher for 20 years and has seen the school grow from 1 teacher with 22 children to 4 teachers with 72 children.
- We are presently located in St. Andrews Church. We added a new class this year and had to turn down many students since we don't have any more room to grow.
- We have a strong alumni of parents also interested in being involved in this project to keep the Friends School building a local school.

Maxine Gross—written correspondence

- Opposes any redevelopment option that uses the Calvert Road site as anything other than a school because it would diminish the community of Calvert Hills and the city as a whole. The proposed use would be more intense than the current one.
- What is the real cost of families not choosing College Park or moving as their children become school age? What is the real cost of College Park continuing to become a less and less livable community, one not attractive to long-term residents?
- Supports an effort to bring a charter school to the Calvert Road site.
- If City Hall must go in the Calvert Road site, I charge you to still dedicate the City to the goal of excellent schools and to using City resources in realizing that goal. If there is money to be made with a parking garage, that money must be dedicated to the provision of an excellent public education for the children of College Park.

Carlton Green—written correspondence

- By razing the City Hall and/or the College Park School/Friends School building, you will be losing the use of two very substantial buildings and incurring millions of dollars of expenses to replace the destroyed usable space. The municipal building is the best-maintained building in the downtown section of the city. It should not be reduced to rubble and the taxpayers burdened with replacing it when it does not need replacement. It makes no economic sense to even consider this.
- The College Park School/Friends School building has cost the City nothing and actually produces substantial revenue for it in the rents paid to the City. The grounds around it serve as a well-maintained recreation area for the City residents. Its use as a school, be it for the present tenant, or a future tenant, should be continued as a valuable asset to all residents.

Heather Ilaf, Education Advisory Committee—March 22, 2005, City Council meeting; written correspondence

- Wants Friends site to stay as a school
- Educational facilities are and will continue to be in high demand